



## THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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### HEALTH AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (M&RA)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (M&RA)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE (M&RA)

SUBJECT: Policy on Oral Health and Readiness

The Military Health System (MHS) is responsible for the assurance of the overall oral health of all uniformed Department of Defense (DoD) personnel. The current DoD Oral Health and Readiness Classification System (HA Policy 02-011) standardizes the dental readiness of all Active and Reserve Component (RC) personnel. Oral health is a significant contributor to force health protection of U.S. Service members, and its importance should not be overlooked. The intent of this policy is to promote the attainment of oral health and to sustain the oral health of Service members throughout their military career and beyond. Implementation of this policy will require command innovation, education, and personal commitment of Service members.

Existing policy (HA Policy 98-021) directs that all Active Component and Selected Reserve (SELRES) personnel undergo an annual dental examination. This examination is critical in assessing the oral health status of active duty, Reserve, and National Guard forces and determines the dental readiness and fitness of duty for U.S. Service members. The 95% dental readiness (Dental Class 1 or 2) target ensures that U.S. forces are maintaining an oral health status to support active duty deployability and Reserve activation. Those personnel in Dental Class 1 are defined as having a current dental examination, and do not require dental treatment or reevaluation. Those in Dental Class 2 still have some active dental disease that requires treatment. Studies have demonstrated a significantly lower incidence of dental emergencies and disease non-battle injury rates among those who deploy in Dental Class 1. This memorandum reaffirms the goal of 95% dental readiness (Dental Class 1 or 2) and establishes a goal of achieving 65% dental health (Dental Class 1) for active duty Service members and SELRES personnel. Although the achievement of 65% dental health for SELRES personnel offers a significant challenge, the goal serves to highlight the importance of oral health for these forces and Health Affairs' commitment to its pursuit. The RC should focus their dental health efforts on those personnel with the highest likelihood of recall and deployment.

The MHS maintains dental health and readiness for all active duty Service members through the Services' dental treatment facilities and established private sector

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care plans. For the Reserve Component, dental readiness is a commander and individual responsibility when not on active duty. The MHS has provided for a cost- shared dental benefits program under the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) to those RC members who otherwise may not have access to care. While this is a voluntary program, National Guard and Reserve members are strongly encouraged to enroll and utilize the program.

Reserve Component members are individually required to maintain a dental readiness status of Class 1 or 2 to ensure they are dentally fit for duty and ready for activation. Reserve and National Guard units must establish and maintain programs to track the dental health status of their individual personnel, as directed by their Service.

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